



**Governor's Proposed Budget FY18-FY-19
Appropriations Hearing
Department of Housing
Friday, February 17, 2017**

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron, and Members of the Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on the important investments through the Department of Housing to support efforts to end homelessness in CT.

Homelessness is an unacceptable condition for any Connecticut resident, and an expensive public policy problem. The good news is public investments in frontline homeless services, permanent supportive housing, and support services are saving public resources and helping families and individuals transition to housing, stability, and hope – and the impact our investments are having is clear and profound: The numbers of homeless in CT are going down year after year. Connecticut was the first state in the nation to end long term homelessness among Veterans in 2016 and one of only three states to end all homelessness among veterans last year. A drop of nearly 50% in chronic long term homelessness between 2014 and 2015 was recorded in Connecticut - the largest reduction in any single state over that period. In December 2016 CT matched all chronically homeless individuals to a housing resource.

Cuts to state funded services at this critical juncture would risk reversing the substantial progress we have made to end homelessness in Connecticut. Reductions in critically important services could mean increases in unsheltered, high-need homelessness, taking us in the wrong direction and imposing new costs on our communities.

The current budget proposal before the legislature preserves funding for critical housing and homelessness services and supports, including: The DOH Housing/Homeless Services line item, \$73.7 million in FY 18 and \$78.3 million in FY 19, for frontline housing/homeless services, outreach, emergency shelters, and the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), which are essential to aid those who have fallen into homelessness and move them quickly to permanent housing. The Rental Assistance Program funds the rental subsidies which make Supportive Housing possible. Supportive Housing continues to be the most effective housing model to assist people experiencing chronic homelessness and is proven to cut public system costs by up to 70%.

We urge the legislature and the Governor to work together to preserve these critically needed resources, so that we can complete the job of ending homelessness in Connecticut, once and for all.

Larry Oaks
Director, CSH